

**BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
Park and Recreation Department
Conference Room, 11th Floor, City Hall
Monday, September 13, 2004
3:30 p.m.**

Present: Bob Aldrich, June Bailey, Dennis Brunner, Colleen Craig, Glen Dey, Bobbie Harris, Janet Miller

Also Present: Jamsheed Mehta and Dave Barber, Wichita-Sedgwick Metropolitan Area Planning Department (MAPD); Tony Madrigal and Carolyn Benitez – La Familia Senior Community Center; Richard Lopez and Roland Alonzo – Service, Employment and Redevelopment (SER) Corporation; Patty Larraga – Institute for Minority Health, Education and Research (IMHER); Martha Sanchez – United Methodist Outreach Services for Latinos (UMOS); and Doug Kupper, Mike North and Maryann Crockett (staff)

President Bailey called the meeting to order at approximately 3:30 p.m. The minutes of the August 16, 2004, Regular Meeting were reviewed and approved as corrected.

PUBLIC AGENDA

The following individuals spoke:

- Lindsay Bellick stated that she would like to thank the Board for voting “no” on the proposal to locate a sewage treatment plant in Pawnee Prairie Park. She said that the community was in complete support of the Board’s decision. She briefly mentioned several concerns and reasons for not locating the plant in the park including the following: it was a community park in a natural setting; protection of the wildlife in the area; the smell the plant would create in the area and what will happen when the capacity of the plant increases. She mentioned that one of the criteria listed for selecting the site was that there were trees to naturally screen the plant; however, she said trees could be planted around a different location for screening. She also asked how many trees would be torn down to accommodate building the plant at the proposed location. She also mentioned concerns about the capacity of the Cowskin Creek to prevent flooding if the plant is located in the park. She commented that over 200 people attended the last District Advisory Board IV meeting concerning the issue. She said the group she represented was circulating a petition and that they had also created a WEB site where the petition could be signed. She asked the Park Board to stand firm on their decision and know that the community supported them.
- Heather Vincent gave a brief history of the park and mentioned that she was the granddaughter of Marsh and Irene Plumlee. She said her grandmother formed a group who helped maintain the trails within the park some twenty years ago. She mentioned that she learned to ride a horse in the park and participated in many other nature related activities along the trails. She said in 1986 the Board of Park Commissioners named the trail in the Park “Irene Plumlee Trails” after her grandmother. She commented that her family, as well as many other people, enjoys the park and trails for walking and other activities.

REGULAR AGENDA

1. **Annual Elections**. Annual elections of the President, First Vice President, and Second Vice President.

On motion by Brunner, second by Aldrich, IT WAS VOTED UNANIMOUSLY that the current officers serve in the same capacity for the remainder of their terms.

2. **Review and Discussion of the Transportation Enhancement Projects**. Attached to the agenda was a memorandum dated 8/30/04 from Jamsheed Mehta, AICP, Chief Planner, MAPD, Subject: Transportation Enhancements. Mr. Mehta began his presentation by stating that the State of Kansas had approximately \$17 million in federal transportation funds for fiscal years 2006 and 2007. He said the City of Wichita would compete for those funds with other statewide projects. He said the three categories under which the City could submit projects were: 1) pedestrian and bicycle facilities; 2) scenic and environmental; and 3) historic preservation of transportation structures.

He referred board members to a map of the four proposed projects, and briefly explained each project as follows:

- **I-135/K-96 Bike Path Connection**. He said this pathway would link McAdams Park to Grove Park and provide continuity between the K-96 and the I-135 trail system. He said there were some safety concerns regarding the width of the right-of-way along the north side of 21st Street; however, staff felt that issue could be effectively dealt with.
- **Historic 13th Street Bridge over the Little Arkansas River**. He said this preservation project would provide structural rehabilitation of the bridge and preserve the art elements that are integral to the structure.
- **Arkansas River/Gypsum Creek Path Connection**. He said this pathway would link the Arkansas River Trail near Galena Street in South Wichita to the Gypsum Creek Trail in Planeview Park.

Mr. Mehta introduced Dave Barber who briefly explained the **Delano Pedestrian-Bicycle Trail** project. He explained that the pathway extended the Arkansas River Trail ½ mile along the abandoned railroad corridor in the Delano District. He referred board members to a detailed map of the proposed trail.

There was brief discussion concerning ownership of a portion of the easement once the railroad was abandoned. President Bailey asked about future plans to extend the trail system to the west. Mr. Barber commented that the proposed Delano Trail would terminate at Seneca; however, it might be possible to extend it with abandonment of Kansas Northern Railroad in the future.

Glen Dey asked about the possibility of addressing the need for a signal crossing at Hillside in connection with the Grove Park Trail project. He commented that although a signal had not been included in the original project, he felt it was important to try to add one for safety reasons. Mr. Mehta stated that staff would check with the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT).

Glen Dey also stated that he has had several complaints from residents along Brooks St. concerning the way the trail ended on the street. He asked about the possibility of extending the trail along the

back of the campus at Buckner School to make it easier for the children to go to the park. He also mentioned that work started on the trail in early spring; however, work seems to have stopped for about two months. He asked if there was a completion clause in the contract and commented that this type of operation gives the public the impression that the City can't manage construction projects. Mr. Mehta stated that he would inform the Public Works Department, who were overseeing the project, of Mr. Dey's concerns.

Janet Miller briefly mentioned preservation of the historical features of the 13th Street Bridge. Mr. Mehta commented that the artwork and other details would be restored.

Bob Aldrich asked about projects scheduled further west. Mr. Mehta mentioned the Swanson Park to Buffalo Park connection and the Maize Rd. to 21st St. bike path. He stated that the Maize Rd. project has been shelved for at least one year due to staffing issues. Director Kupper also mentioned that staff has been working with Sedgwick County and the City of Goddard on the railroad abandonment along West Kellogg. Bob Aldrich mentioned the County Acres area. Staff commented that other projects had priority.

On motion by Miller, second by Dey, IT WAS VOTED UNANIMOUSLY to endorse the City of Wichita's TEA-21 Transportation Enhancements projects for 2006-2007 as presented.

3. **Request by El Zocalo – Woodland Park North.** Tony Madrigal, President, La Familia Senior Community Center Board, began his presentation by mentioning his involvement in the community and other projects and his membership on numerous boards including the Wichita Chamber of Commerce; National Endowment Association of Wichita State University; Board of Trustees – Wichita State University; Boy Scout Board; Wichita Visioneering Steering Committee; 21st Street Project Steering Committee; President of the Hispanic Alliance; the Hispanic Leadership Council and Idea, Inc. in Augusta, which works with youngsters. He said he is concerned about the community as a whole, not just the El Zocalo project.

Mr. Madrigal stated that the mission of the Park Department was to meet the needs of the community. He said the purpose of the proposed community center was also to meet the needs of the community. He commented that they have gathered over 400 signatures supporting the proposed El Zocalo project.

Mr. Madrigal introduced the following individuals, who briefly described the services provided by their organizations:

- **Richard Lopez, Director of SER Corporation,** referred board members to a site plan of the proposed two-story building. He stated that it was approximately 20,500 square feet. He commented that the architect did not have time to provide building renderings or structural elevation. There was brief discussion concerning additional parking needs, which staff indicated would need to be coordinated through the Planning Department and Central Inspection.

Mr. Lopez indicated that SER would require approximately 6,000 square feet of the facility for their administrative offices, four classrooms--two for computer training and one for general education development (GED) study. Responding to a question from President Bailey, he stated that there were approximately 20 students per classroom and that there would be between 12-15 SER staff positions at the facility.

- Patty Larraga, Institute for Minority Health, Education and Research (IMHER), said the Institute was currently housed at the La Familia Center. She said their hours were Monday through Friday from 9:00 am – 3:00 pm. She said they provided a number of services including clinical services and referral information, diabetes self-management training, chronic disease case management, professional speakers bureau, and research/data collection.

Director Kupper asked if they referred people to the Health Station at Evergreen Recreation Center. She responded yes, and that they refer to other clinics as well. Bob Aldrich asked if the Kansas Board of Health monitored their program, specifically the clinic. She explained that they were a nursing clinic that provided health promotion, education and referral services. She clarified that they did not practice medicine.

Janet Miller asked what facilities they would be using in the proposed new building. Brenda Kelly commented that they would need four offices, three examining rooms and a laboratory. They were not sure of the exact square footage. There was discussion concerning licensing and the work to be conducted in the laboratory. Patty Larraga explained that they have a grant from the Kansas Department of Health and Education (KDHE) to collect minority health data electronically on senior/community members with diabetes. She said all the necessary licenses would be obtained to conduct their program and research. She also mentioned that their medical director was a doctor. Janet Miller clarified that IMHER would be a paying tenant in the facility and asked how they would finance rent payments. Patty Larraga responded they received grants. Janet Miller commented that grant funds did not cover operating expenses. She added that since the City of Wichita would technically own the building, it was the Board's responsibility to insure that each entity was properly funded.

Roland Alonzo, Chair, SER Corporation commented that they were in a "Catch-22" situation. They couldn't really go after funding opportunities until they had secured a site for the new building. Bob Aldrich asked about reserve funding. Mr. Alonzo referred to the \$1 million dollar federal grant that they had received from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

President Bailey asked how many IMHER employees would be housed in the facility. Patty Larraga estimated that eventually between eight to ten employees and said that was in addition to students.

- Carolyn Benitez, La Familia Senior Community Center (LFSCC), stated that La Familia had been providing services to the community since 1989. She said services provided include social services, health, education, nutrition, transportation, translation, job service, legal services, special activities, and recreational activities. She said that the community surrounding the center was predominantly Latino and that the Hispanic population in Wichita was continuing to grow. She commented that the majority of La Familia's clients were low income, with 75% earning \$30,000 or less annually. She added that 55% of their clients also did not have a high school education. She said the goal of the El Zocalo partnership was to better serve the community.

Ms. Benitez said El Zocalo would provide a centralized facility focused on services and programs that would eliminate barriers created by ethnic background and immigration status. She said they are hearing positive support from the community about the proposed center. She commented that she lived and work in the area and stated that the park was highly underused and had no bathroom

facilities. She said the community lacks facilities and programs that El Zocalo can provide to enhance the park.

President Bailey asked about staffing. Ms. Benitez responded they there would be one full time and five part time positions. She said that might increase with the new facility. Janet Miller asked about project funding and anticipated funding sources. Ms. Benitez said they had an operating budget of \$115,000 and that they would also be seeking private donations. Tony Madrigal informed the board that LFSCC had taken a budget cut and were forced to lay off three part time staff, in addition to Ms. Benitez accepting a one-third cut in pay. He said a new facility would open up options to provide other services and opportunities to apply for other grants. Janet Miller again mentioned that grant monies did not usually fund operating expenses or salaries. Roland Alonzo explained that is changing, particularly with health care related grant funding.

- Martha Sanchez – United Methodist Outreach Services for Latinos (UMOS), briefly reviewed the programs and services provided by UMOS as follows: bilingual/bicultural mediation; parenting classes, Women's Leadership Development Program, At Risk Children, Healthy Marriages/Healthy Relationships, and Mentoring Programs. She said there was a desperate need in the community for their services.
- Roland Alonzo, SER Corporation, stated that El Zocalo has received an Economic Development Initiative grant in the amount of \$994,100 from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for building construction costs. He stated that estimated costs were around \$2.5 million and that they would be pursuing additional funding sources once they got the site and total building costs finalized. He said health grant funding, tenant rent, leasing of the facility for public and private functions and meetings, and funding received from on-going programs and community donations, will help pay for building operation and overhead.

President Bailey asked about estimated operating expenses. Mr. Alonzo stated they were between \$35,000-\$40,000 annually. He said they planned on supplementary rental payments with other activities such as fiestas, art shows, cultural events, and other community events that would bring people into the park. Ms. Benitez commented that they would like to make the park more user-friendly. Tony Madrigal commented that people were more important than land and that they were trying to service people in the community. He added that this was an opportunity for the Park Board to do their part for the community. He concluded by saying that the proposed location was on City property, not park property.

President Bailey asked Mike North, City Attorney, to address the issue of property title. Mr. North commented that although the City had legal title to the property, it is designated as a park and used as a park. He said regardless of how the land was titled, it was a City requirement that the Park Board make a recommendation to the City Council on whether the project merits giving away City land. Director Kupper commented that staff was researching archived Park Board minutes to see if the property was acquired or designated for park purposes. Janet Miller commented that of the approximately 4,100 acres of parks in the City, only 1,500 acres are titled to the Park Board. She mentioned several parks including Riverside and Sim Parks, which were titled to the City.

President Bailey opened the discussion for public comment. The following individuals spoke on the issue:

- Dale McCloud stated that the City has allowed parks to be used for a variety of reasons including building a school in South Linwood Park, which was a similar use to what was being proposed for the senior center in Woodland Park. He said the center is involved with the community and supports the people who live there and whose needs need to be addressed. He also mentioned that he felt the park was underutilized.
- Daniel Oropesa said the Hispanic senior citizen population was growing and that the proposed senior center would provide help to them. He said he had worked on revitalization of the 21st Street area years ago with the New Model Cities Program sponsored by the City. He said redevelopment of the area was a question of “pay now or pay later”. He asked the Board to accept people for what they are and commented that he would respect the Board’s decision.
- David Franks, GreenWay Alliance, asked about land costs. Roland Alonzo stated that land costs started at \$250,000 and up for three acres. Mr. Franks commented that there is a sign on Woodland Park that says it is a park no matter who owns it. He said he also felt that El Zocalo has shown bad faith in their handling of the project by failing to develop other alternatives along and 21st St. corridor. He said he saw no reason why the center had to be located on parkland. He added that he felt the presentation was based on guilt, rather than reason.
- Debra Foster, GreenWay Alliance acknowledged that El Zocalo would provide a lot of good resources to the community; however, she said nothing adequately explained why the center needed to be located on parkland. She recommended that El Zocalo be located somewhere other than Woodland Park.
- Rosalie Bradley, Wichita Independent Neighborhoods (WIN), stated that parkland has always been a concern of WIN and its members. She said Wichita is low on acres of land for parks. She said she understands that El Zocalo’s request is to donate parkland for a building in North Woodland Park. She stated that WIN and its membership object to using parkland for purposes other than recreation, green space, and enjoyment of nature. She added that there was other land in the area that could be used for a community center. She concluded by asking the Park Board to deny the request.
- Cirilo Arteago stated that he was 80 years old and was born and raised in Wichita. He said he had worked for the Urban Renewal Agency and that as far as the 21st Revitalization Plan was concerned, he didn’t think he was going to see it happen in his lifetime. He asked the Board to be fair to the Hispanic senior citizens.
- Audres Fraga commented that the building would provide social services needed for the community and United States senior citizens who live in the area. He said they have the same right to enjoy their retirement as everyone else.

Bobbie Harris thanked the group for their presentation. Dennis Brunner also thanked the group for all their work. He said he didn’t question any of the groups on their dedication or the importance of the programs they represented. He said the issue for the Board to consider was whether to give away parkland. He said that decision did not have anything to do with the Hispanic culture, and he could not base his opinion on emotions. He also mentioned that he still wasn’t clear about how much land

would be required for the building. Roland Alonzo commented that the architect estimated that three acres would be needed for the proposed facility.

Bob Aldrich said he felt like the Board was between a “rock and a hard spot” and said he realized that part of the City’s obligation was to assist the community. He said he agreed that the services should be offered to the citizens of the neighborhood in that area, whether by continuing to lease the park property or by acquiring non-parkland in that area.

President Bailey commented that all of the programs the groups represented were outstanding programs, but she asked if the proposal was a good use of parkland. She said she sees the need for La Familia; however, she did not agree that the facility needed to be located in Woodland Park. She said she felt the City needed to step forward and help the group find other property in the area. She added that she was also concerned about setting a precedent and commented that two other not-for-profit groups have contacted her about the possibility of acquiring parkland. She also mentioned that when the City gave up land in South Linwood Park for construction of a school, the school board exchanged approximately 18-½ acres as replacement land. She concluded by saying that the City was already short of green space in the area, and suggested the possibility of La Familia remaining in the current building and continuing their present program.

Janet Miller commented that the specific charge of the Park Board was to be stewards of parkland and protect parkland. She said in the recent past the Board has voted to give away parkland and have been “beaten about the head and shoulders” for that decision. She commented that the Board did not have the authority to make a decision on the El Zocalo proposal. She said the Board would make a recommendation to the City Council, who would make the final decision on the proposal, which could be different from the Park Board. She said she did not feel this was a decision between parkland and El Zocalo, that she felt the neighborhood deserved both. She said she believed everything she had heard in terms of the need in the community. She said she also thought the Board should ask the City Council to help the group find a location for the proposed facility. She expressed concern about giving parkland to non-profit groups and asked the question, “Where would it stop?” She commented that all non-profit groups provide much needed, critically under funded services to people who are in desperate need of them. She asked how the Board would decide which non-profits got parkland.

On motion by Miller, second by Brunner, IT WAS VOTED to ask the City of Wichita to work with El Zocalo to find suitable land in close proximity to where they are now so that they can build the center on land other than what is currently used and designated as parkland.

After discussion, it was agreed to amend the motion to read, “find land in the 21st Street corridor.”

The amended motion passed 5-2. Bob Aldrich and Bobbie Harris – No.

4. **Director’s Update.** Director Kupper reported briefly on the following items:

- **October Park Board Meeting.** Director Kupper reported that he would be unable to attend the October 11 Park Board Meeting due to his attendance at the National Recreation and Park Association Conference. It was the general consensus of the Board to reschedule the meeting to October 18, 2004. Bobbie Harris indicated that she would be unable to attend the meeting on that date.

- Request for Proposal (RFP) – Tennis Center. Reported that the City Council would be discussing the written response to the RFP on the tennis center at the Council workshop scheduled for September 28, 2004. Responding to a question from Bobbie Harris, he indicated that the meeting was open to the public.
- Woodland Park. Commented that staff will be instructed to remove the graffiti on the back of the storage building.
- Schweiter Park. Responding to a question from President Bailey, he commented that so far, no funds had been allocated for tennis court replacement in 2005. He said staff would evaluate the effectiveness of the crack filler used at Schweiter, which was considered a temporary fix estimated to last approximately six months. There was brief discussion concerning the product and labor costs to install it. It was also suggested that installation might be a good neighborhood volunteer project.

5. Executive Session.

On motion by Bailey, second by Dey, IT WAS VOTED UNANIMOUSLY that the Board recess into executive session for consultation with legal counsel on matters privileged in the attorney-client relationship relating to Ordinance #125 and that the Board return from executive session in approximately 5 minutes at 6:35 p.m.

The Board returned from executive session at approximately 6:35 p.m. No action was necessary as a result of the executive session.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

June Bailey, President

ATTEST:

Maryann Crockett, Clerk
Recording Secretary